

# glosso- alia

sweet  
sounds of  
ecstasy  
book  
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Rene Noorbergen



# **glossolalia**

Sweet Sounds of Ecstasy

**book  
1**

by Rene Noorbergen

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# the sanctifying tongue

“Medi alukan— ala— du aru— shamma shamma.  
Solama sulama sumala tamaku abada da da kumi sala  
sala mili amatala shamma shamma balu—

“Ama tala manga diekain oh sila sila aboda take  
shamma shamma—”

A strange sound engulfed me as I quietly entered the 30-odd-pew church nestled peacefully somewhere in a staid old residential section of Memphis, Tennessee. In search for information on the manifestation of the gift of tongues, which had now begun to seep through the cracks in the thus far impenetrable doctrinal walls protecting the country's main-line religions, I had been directed to this solemn looking building.

The fortress-like image of the church had for years safeguarded its traditional heritage. Yet, somehow this was now changing.

The December wind howled threateningly about the church's lone spire, and wet whirly fingers of rain tugged at me as I made my way to the door of the church. Holding the dripping brim of my rain hat with one hand

and attempting with the other to keep my trenchcoat closed, I climbed the crumbling concrete steps and leaned my wet weight against the aging door.

Within seconds the squeaks of the rusty hinges mingled with a strange, melodious sound, a hint of which had reached out for me while I had slushed past the church's dimly lit windows moments before.

"Shamma shamma oh amatala taka aboda shamma shamma— I lake tiki sala aboda— shamma takala takala shimmi—"

A language? It was most certainly a sound I had never before encountered. One moment pleading, the next instant jubilant and triumphant, it was a solitary voice with a shimmering background of subdued cries of ecstasy. It implored, cried with a pulsating chain of sounds that became insistent and captivating in the dark as I continued to shuffle across the foot-worn marble slabs that led to the sanctuary doors.

Hat under my arm, coat still dripping, I squeezed through the narrow crack in the door and joined the congregation, taking an outside seat on one of the back pews.

The entire congregation—young and old alike—listened with raptured attention to the flood of mysterious sounds that poured forth from the mouth of a young man standing on one of the front pews. He had turned around when I entered, and across the uneven sea of heads I watched him from my vantage point of self-imposed impartiality.

He was young—no doubt about that—perhaps 21 or

22 years of age. His supernatural performance, however, more than replaced his obvious immaturity. There he stood, speaking, talking, uttering sounds definitely not from this part of the world. His wet hair framed a pockmarked face lost in rapture. Slender hands raised skyward as if reaching for God, he talked on and on, praying in sounds that seemed to have no resemblance to a known language—but that no one but me seemed to notice.

Internally fused with an unknown power, his hands caressed the air, pleading, pulling, begging for something from on high, and with each passing second, my initial impression that something unearthly had taken possession of his innermost being gained strength.

An aging woman seated up front, who up until that point had managed to exclude herself from the mainstream of excitement developing around her, suddenly arose. Instantly the eyes of all the congregation focused on her.

Resolutely grasping hold of her skirt, she climbed up on the narrow seat of her pew and motioned to the believers.

"Stop—hear? Stop! He is praying!" she cried, completely lost in her words, tears running down her withered red cheeks. "He is thanking God for all His blessings." And raising her arms in the air, she continued, "I know his tongue! It's ancient Indian!"

Her task completed, she quickly slipped down and quietly shriveled up in her pew, mingling once again with the ecstatic believers.

To me it seemed a strange meeting—in fact one of the most unusual I had ever witnessed. In my career as a journalist I had covered a variety of assignments and had been exposed to many diverse languages ranging from Albanian to Zulu, but this was different—very different indeed.

With a critical eye I began to scan the congregation. There weren't many people, perhaps 35 or 40 of them

By this time the supernatural power had turned the religious meeting into a climax of praise, as all hands reached high in a pleading gesture.

With his hands pronouncing blessings left and right, a middle-aged man, evidently the minister, separated himself from a small group of praying individuals, and walked to the pulpit.

“Listen, my people,” he exclaimed, his face beaming with joy. “This is the Lord you’re listening to. He’s here. This is the Holy Spirit. This is Pentecost all over again! Praise God! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!” Then he hurried down from the rostrum again to rejoin his praying people.

A sudden jarring motion at my shoulder made me turn my head.

My neighbor showed me the reason.

Standing up in his full height of perhaps five feet, two inches, he too had felt the spirit and was joining the experience with his own ecstatic tongue.

“Oh si si kalini— idi ma talu uno— ta kala—” His voice faltered, then picked up speed and clarity. “Ini tola tola muni— taka ka takaka—”

I had occupied a seat at the end of one of the back pews. At last I stood up and walked out, head bowed. None noticed.

"I wonder—" I muttered more to myself than to anyone else. "Is this what happened at Pentecost?"

Sudden bursts of "hallelujah," with clapping of hands and exclamations of pure joy, pierced the flimsy access doors to the church's sanctuary. It was in answer to one of the exuberant shouts that I turned in the hallway and cast one last peek through the small spy window in the door.

By now the entire congregation was separating into several small prayer groups, and high-spirited prayers were filling the air. In every corner tongues-speakers and their interpreters poured forth their unique messages. The usher in the back row had joined in. "I too want the spirit—I want the spirit—"

Because of my previous studies in the world of the psychic and the supernatural, I had often pondered the question of the gift of tongues. This is called thus because its believers and practitioners maintain that through the Holy Spirit they have received the same gift of tongues—the power to speak "other" tongues and languages—as was granted to the disciples at Pentecost, when tongues of fire descended upon them, signifying that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was this promised baptism with God-power and the accompanying ability to speak foreign languages that enabled them to carry out Christ's command to "preach the gospel

into all the world," reaching nonbelievers in surrounding nations *in their own tongues*.

For many years known as a key doctrine of the Pentecostal church, the ability to speak "other tongues" has penetrated the doctrinal walls of other Christian churches since the early 1960's under the name of "Charismatic (also Neo-Pentecostal) Movement." It was Dennis J. Bennett, pastor of the sophisticated St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, who changed the direction of the tongues. For a long time he had fought a deep emotional battle affecting his personal religious life, and on Sunday morning, April 3, 1960, looking tense, he faced his expectant congregation. Some who remember that day say that it gave them a foreboding of a dire announcement.

He did not disappoint them.

Addressing his audience with utmost sincerity, he confessed reluctantly that he had received the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" in October of the previous year.

Reporting on this, *The Nation*, September 28, 1963, quoted him as saying, "The Holy Spirit did take my lips and tongue and form a new and powerful language of praise and power that I myself could not understand." In the resulting chaos that sprang up in the sanctuary, one of the associate priests removed his ecclesiastical robe, resigned amid great pandemonium, and angrily walked out of the church.

The end result of Father Bennett's shocking announcement was the submission of his resignation to the 2,500-member church. Later on in the following year, he

transferred to St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, where today he is one of the foremost spokesmen for the Charismatic Movement and a frequent speaker at charismatic meetings. In the twelve years that have passed since that dramatic confession, many theologians and historians have begun to rate the influence of the tongues in present-day Christianity on equal par with the Protestant Reformation, for in these short years its impact on the Christian world has been of such magnitude that it can never again be forgotten.

Charismatic's two leading components, *speaking in tongues* and *faith healing*, are largely responsible for this, and even such major secular publications as *Time* and *Life* have recognized the relentless force of these two elements.

Said *Time*, "It is the fastest growing church in the Hemisphere."—*Time*, Nov. 2, 1962, p. 56. *Life Magazine* called it "the Third Force—a development as important as was the birth of Catholicism and Protestantism."—"The Third Force in Christendom," *Life*, June 9, 1958, p. 113. Still others have labeled it the "New Revival Movement," the "Wielding Ax of God," the "New Penetration," or simply "The Return of God's Own Church."

Recent figures (1973) reveal that the Charismatic Movement has quietly invaded over 40 different Protestant denominations, and no less than 2,000 clergymen of churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches now practice the "gift of tongues" with or without the spiritual participation of their congrega-

tions. In fact, in many cases the parishioners or congregations have no knowledge of these "subversive" activities of their spiritual shepherds. Once ultraconservative, the Methodist Church now harbors tongues-speaking laymembers and clergymen. The Episcopalians have embraced its principles so strongly that their leaders and those of the Assemblies of God (one of the original Pentecostal groups) have already met in conference to discuss their mutual problems associated with the growing "ministry of the Holy Spirit."

The Baptists, too, speak in tongues. The Southern Baptist Convention, the American Baptist Convention, and the Baptist Bible Fellowship have within their ranks theologians who practice their new-found spiritual gifts. Many Presbyterians also speak in tongues, while almost 10 percent of America's Lutheran congregations boast of active glossolalia cells in their midst. Even the once staunch Dutch Reformed and Christian Dutch Reformed churches have been infiltrated with remarkable success.

Exact figures concerning this movement are difficult to obtain, and of those available, not all are accurate, though based on "reliable estimates."

Opinions as to the number of Catholics who practice the Pentecostal phenomenon around the world vary greatly. Most recent figures show that up to 250,000 Roman Catholics in the United States are convincingly involved, according to William Willoughby, "Neo-Pentecostal Parishes; Boom or Bane?" *Washington Evening Star*, March 11, 1972, p. a-8. Their Directory of Charismatic Prayer Groups listed 350 active groups in

the United States and abroad in 1971, a figure which soared to 625 just a year later. A similar growth was evident at the International Conference on Charismatic Revival. These meetings, held at Notre Dame University, had an attendance of 1,250 in 1970; 5,500 in 1971; 11,500 in 1972, and in a recent interview with Auxiliary Bishop Joseph McKinney of Grand Rapids, Michigan, the leading figure in the Catholic Charismatic Movement, I was informed that this rate of growth is not declining. "It is certainly one of the most significant developments in the church today, and most of my colleagues look approvingly on these pentecostals," he told me.

I asked him whether he personally spoke in tongues.

"I have always told people I haven't," he replied. "But recently a couple of times I think that I have had a kind of an induced form that I really hesitated to do. But somehow or other, being with the people and noticing their freedom, I have suddenly become conscious of the fact that I have restricted myself in places where I shouldn't because of my background and orientation. So for this reason once in a while I do that when others are doing it just to permit myself to say—to utter *syllables that are not words*, this with the intention and the resolve and the attempt to open myself up and praise God in the best way I can, because this is what real tongues are." This statement, coming from the man recently appointed by the nation's bishops to oversee the movement, is significant.

Tongues speakers are not limited to the United States, but are also numerous in Latin America and

Europe. Alan Walker, who discussed the issue with many leaders on both of these continents, relates this in his book, *Breakthrough—Rediscovery of the Holy Spirit.* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1964.)

"The Pentecostal Church in South America has become the fastest growing church in the world," he says. "In Chile since 1930 Pentecostalism has doubled itself every ten years. On the continent as a whole there could be five or six million people linked to the movement."—*Breakthrough*, page 10. This was true in 1964, and if the rate of growth has continued on the scale mentioned, which is a realistic possibility, then today, 1973, the number may well have mushroomed to *ten million*.

In Brazil, a dramatic change in religious emphasis has also taken place. Whereas in 1930 only 9.5 percent of the Protestant segment of the population admitted belief in Pentecostalism, by 1964, according to Waldo A. Cesar, they comprised 73.6 percent of all Protestants.—*Protestantismo e Imperialismo na America Latina* (Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1968), page 105.

And Europe? It is no different there, as a recent fact-finding tour indicated. Europe is indeed in a spiritual turmoil, and no single group will admit this as readily as the Europeans!

While traveling in Europe in late 1972, I spent several days in The Netherlands and had numerous encounters with the Navigators, members of the Youth for Christ movement, and the Campus Crusade. With its 13 million inhabitants quite equally divided between the Catholic

Church and Protestant denominations, not to mention the large number of political parties closely aligned with these churches, this age-old bastion of liberty and free speech was overripe for a change. This change, it appears now, is in the making.

What is happening in this industrious little country behind the dikes is tremendous. Christ-centered coffee bars scattered throughout the country attract hundreds of youth every night. Dutch Reformed pastors, admitting that their churches are dying if not already dead, beg Youth for Christ leaders to "take over" in their neighborhoods. One television commentator smilingly told me of the American ambassador and his wife and their widely reported conversion to Christ. The Bible study groups, meeting in their private quarters, were recently featured on Dutch national television. Everywhere I went I heard of the revolutionary changes taking place. Old barges, abandoned windmills, World War II airplane hangars, and even out-of-the-way stables are used by the zealous converts in their attempts to organize new meeting places and form new groups. The Jesus People, many of whom share an enthusiasm for tongues with the American charismatics, have vowed to introduce the Holy Spirit to every major population center in the Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg). Judging from their actions and reactions, they are well on their way. Are their leaders perhaps too young and too inexperienced to lead whole nations to Christ?

*Christianity Today* asked the same question on its

European investigative mission. The answer it reported is one that typifies the European Charismatics. "Jesus is in a hurry to reach the world," voiced one of the leaders. "Therefore we must be in a hurry too."—*Christianity Today*, Oct. 13, 1972, p. 24.

Everywhere I traveled—Germany, England, Belgium, France, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland—I met with the same reaction.

"Jesus People, you say? Charismatics? Tongues? They're all over! They're upsetting our formal religious life," one Swedish clergyman reacted. "We'd just as well pack up and go home. They're beginning to take over our churches." Nightclub dates for musical presentations about their supernatural experiences are common occurrences with Scandinavian charismatics. Jesus concerts, Jesus Day festivals, door-to-door witnessing campaigns, and organized attempts to reach the socially down-trodden as well as the upper strata of society are the order of the day.

"YWAM [Youth With a Mission] also sponsors a center at Christiana, a run-down former army base in Copenhagen that is one of the worst hell holes on earth," it says, relating to the activities of one of the groups. "More than 1,000 hippies, junkies, pushers, sex freaks, witches, Satan worshipers and mental cases from all over the world live there in assorted communal arrangements—amid disease and absence of the law. There are overdose deaths nearly every month. . . . Despite the depravity, some have come to Christ. 'God is scooping up the scum of the earth and making some-

thing beautiful out of it,' reflected a repentant alumnus of *Christiana*."—*Christianity Today*, op. cit. (Italics supplied.)

As in Europe, the same thing is happening in the British Isles and also in Communist Eastern Europe. Even the traditional gypsies in Southern Europe are now engaged in the movement, for it has been estimated that at least 25,000 of them are presently evangelizing all over the Riviera and the Costa Brava with their strange new tongues, thereby not only transforming their traditional image but their *modus operandi* as well.

All these groups may be operating under different names, but their goals are the same. They want to reach people for Christ before it is too late. It's only love they're after—to receive and to spread. "We need the Spirit's manifestations now!" one young crusader pointed out to me. "Once that happens, everything else will fall into place."

Although there are similarities between the Pentecostals and the charismatics, the latter have seemingly divorced themselves from any official connection with the Pentecostal founding fathers. No study of the charismatic movement, however, can be considered complete without examining the modern foundation supporting the tongues-speaking movements.

It all began around the turn of the century when Charles F. Parham, a young Methodist minister, dissatisfied with his spiritual condition, determined to do something about it. Reasoning that only a true rebirth and a rediscovery of the "gifts of the spirit" would bring

him into absolute harmony with God, he set out to establish a Bible school in an abandoned mansion in Topeka, Kansas, to be utilized as a "spiritual discovery center."

The building chosen for the school was sarcastically known as Stone's Folly, so named because the builder ran out of money halfway through its construction. This stigma, however, did not hamper Parham's zeal. With forty students, he initiated a study into the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, with the hope of discovering whether there might be one specific element common to all of those who had received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Biblical times.

In December, 1900, Parham was scheduled to embark on a three-day trip, and he decided that in the interim his students should undertake an intense study of the book of Acts.

"Study every account in Acts where the baptism of the Spirit is received," he charged them, "and find out whether there was a common denominator."

Returning three days later, he found his school buzzing with excitement, for "on five occasions where the Holy Ghost was received," he was told, "it was followed by the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Could this perhaps be what we're looking for?"

A methodical comparison of the texts showed that there had indeed been a connection between the Holy Spirit and tongues, and in order to test its validity in modern times, they decided upon a marathon prayer session. Beginning at daybreak the following morning,

they sent up prayers for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The morning passed, and so did the afternoon, yet the Spirit did not come. Early that evening, at about 7:00, one of the students, Agnes N. Ozman remembered something important.

"Wasn't it true that many of the baptisms described in Acts were accompanied by an action, as well as prayer? Didn't the person offering the prayer often put his hands on the one who wished to receive the baptism? In the Bible she found the reference she remembered. There it was: at Samaria, at Damascus, at Ephesus, always the word 'hands.' 'Putting his hands on him.' 'Then laid they their hands on them'

"Miss Ozman went to find Charles Parham and told him about her new thought.

"Would you pray for me this way?" she asked.

"Parham hesitated just long enough to utter a short prayer about the rightness of what they were doing. Then, gently he placed his two hands on Miss Ozman's head. Immediately, quietly, there came from her lips a flow of syllables which neither of them could understand.

"The Pentecostals look back on this hour—7:00 p.m., New Year's Eve, 1900, as one of the key dates in their history. They point to it as the first time since the days of the early church that the baptism of the Holy Spirit had been sought, where speaking in tongues was expected as the initial evidence."—John L. Sherrill, *They Speak With Other Tongues* (A Spire Book), page 38.

Once the discovery of the common denominator had

been established, the news spread throughout America. Fighting fierce opposition from both clergy and lay-members, Parham in blunt desperation took to the street corners to propagate his teachings. When subsequently informed that Stone's Folly would be sold from under him, he moved his operations to Houston, Texas.

By this time, his efforts had begun to receive serious recognition, for his preaching was dynamic. He proclaimed that only the "full gospel" could save; that is, the gospel in its entirety, *complete with tongues, faith healing, and other gifts as promised to accompany the reception of the Holy Spirit*. Consequently, faith healing was soon added to the list of Pentecostal manifestations.

One of Parham's Houston students, W. J. Seymour, exported the full gospel to the West Coast, linking his name permanently to 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles, an address that was to become a Pentecostal mecca for years to come.

An ordained Negro minister, Seymour had arrived in Los Angeles to take over the congregation of a small Black church. But as soon as he opened his series of sermons and announced his intention to preach on the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, the church elders, who had previously heard of his new ideas, protested vehemently. When Seymour returned for his second sermon, he found the church doors barred. His congregation had formally rejected him.

Accepting the invitation of a dissenting church member, Seymour soon found himself presenting the remainder of the series in her home. For three days he

preached there, expounding on the Holy Spirit. On the evening of the third day it happened. As he was talking, his listeners suddenly began to speak in tongues, speaking, laughing, and singing, using syllables they never knew existed. It caused such enthusiasm that when the shouts of Hallelujah and the clapping had reached a deafening crescendo, the roof caved in, and the rafters crashed down. This signaled the end of the meeting.

Having now substantiated the validity of his claims in the eyes of his followers, Seymour had no trouble finding a suitable meeting place. This time it was an abandoned livery stable on Azusa Street, wedged in between a stable and a tombstone factory.

Some who witnessed the scenes that took place there for the next 1,000 days called it a true spiritual revival. Often with more praying than preaching, Seymour led out, but allowed others to take over whenever possible. His believers came from everywhere: New England, Canada, Great Britain. No one was sent away. Old-time Pentecostals, when asked to identify the place where the movement received its greatest thrust, usually agree:

"It was in Stone's Folly that the movement was born," they say. "But it would have died a quiet and painless death if it had not been for the Azusa Street Mission."

Much has changed since the early days of Pentecostalism. The early movement was marked by the low educational level of its converts. It generally consisted of those who did not feel at home in main-line churches, partly because of class distinction found there.

One student of Pentecostalism wrote:

"The appeal of Pentecostalism is limited quite clearly to the naive and gullible mind which will accept things without investigation. The great majority of the followers of the healers are old people, shallow people—people cast aside by society and forgotten by the proud 'established churches,' to our eternal discredit."—Carroll Stegall, Jr., *The Modern Tongues and Healing Movement*.

Not only were all class barriers absent in the Pentecostal circles, but racial barriers were also almost nonexistent. Today the social and organizational structure of the early pioneer Pentecostal churches has changed. The semieducated and unskilled are still welcome, but a new breed, the intellectuals, have taken control of its once loosely knit congregations. Their full gospel emphasis, however, has remained.

While there is little basic difference between the old-time Pentecostals and the charismatics, the latter prefer this new name. It distinguishes them from a movement which was once believed to consist of the ignorant and the emotionally unstable. As a rule, the charismatics try to involve themselves in the phenomenon of speaking in tongues and spiritual healing practices without entering into the other kinds of ecstatic behavior so characteristic of some of the Pentecostal churches. Another difference is in the social makeup of most of their groups. In marked contrast to their heritage builders, the charismatic groups appeal mainly to the educated, and this thrust, together with their

rather sophisticated use of tongues, has gained them thousands of converts in the upper stratum of society. Today doctors, lawyers, educators, and businessmen find that they can combine their desire for a "new birth" with a tongues experience—without becoming the topic of ridicule from their friends and neighbors.

Mrs. Jeane Stone, board member of the Blessed Trinity Society, a group formed by Harold Bredesen, a Dutch Reformed minister and avid tongues enthusiast, says of these tongues:

"Their private use is more important than public, more oriented to clergy and professional classes, more Bible-centered as against experience, not separatist, more orderly meetings with strict adherence to Pauline directives, less emphasis on tongues."—As quoted by Frank Farrell, "Outburst of Tongues: The New Penetration," *Christianity Today*, September 13, 1963, p. 6.

The question as to whether the charismatic movement is *strictly* a spontaneous outlet for emotional ecstasy, leading to a sense of spiritual fulfillment, can be answered in the negative. There are undoubtedly those who feel themselves attracted to the movement and join on their own initiative, but the majority of converts are sought out through a conscientious missionary endeavor. Converts are won by individual church members, and also by organizations such as the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, a California-based enterprise led by Demos Shakarian. A wealthy businessman, he formed his organization after having been encouraged in the idea by the spiritual activist, Oral Roberts.

Members of the Shakarian family are no newcomer to the Pentecostal experience. They proudly point out that one of the first Pentecostal churches in North America was established in their California home in 1905 as a result of their interest in the Azusa Street Mission. However, their experience with the supernatural was evident long before this. *The Shakarian Story*, by Thomas Nickel, reveals that members of the family have been involved in direct revelations, visions, speaking in tongues, and miraculous healings for over 100 years, predating by many years their first arrival in America.

The chief purpose of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI) is to implant within the narrow boundaries of the traditional churches the manifestations of Pentecostalism. To accomplish this, the organization sponsors banquets, conventions, and breakfasts on a local, national, and international level. Being both astute businessmen and Full Gospel Pentecostalists, the Shakarians do not leave a stone unturned to attain their goal. Says Russel T. Hitt, "The most polished of public relations techniques have been enrolled to advance the movement. While there is certainly nothing wrong with using modern techniques, the *neo-Pentecostalism cannot claim complete spontaneity.*"—Russel T. Hitt, "The New Pentecostalism, an Appraisal," *Eternity*, July, 1963, p. 16. (Italics supplied.)

An important instrument in this all-out effort is their monthly publication, VOICE, which enthusiastically publicizes such happenings as testimonies, "baptisms in

the spirit," and other related topics. One of the most recent thrusts (Jan. 1973) of the FGBMFI concerns the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Regarding the church as spiritually impoverished because of its reluctance to join or endorse the charismatic movement, they have decided to "enrich" it with the "gift of tongues" by mailing a copy of their monthly VOICE to those Adventists that have been placed on their mailing list, hoping to repeat the impact a similar effort had on another major denomination in the United States.



# tongues in history

Throughout recorded history there have been many occasions where religious people have spoken in unknown tongues—glossolalia. Most of the known accounts predating the Pentecostal experience are of non-Christian origin. Therefore most Christians would hardly take the position that every occurrence of glossolalia must be an expression of the will of God. Yet there are glossolalists who subscribe to this view. As a rule, the charismatics allude to Pentecost as the supreme example of supernatural tongues; however, the recorded cases of *glossolalia* go back as far as 1100 B.C. At that time a young Amon worshiper made ancient headlines and attracted historical notoriety when he suddenly became possessed by a god and began to emit sounds in a strange ecstatic “tongue.” In the “Report of Wenamon,” a text giving the oldest account of glossolalia known to man (originating in Byblos, a temple city in historical Lebanon), we find the scanty details:

“Now, when he sacrificed to his gods, the gods seized one of his noble youths, making him frenzied, so that he

said, 'Bring the god hither! Bring the messenger of Amon who hath him. Send him and let him go.' "—George A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1916), page 353.

Seven hundred years later, the Greek philosopher Plato also made mention of the "gift" in his time. In his *Phaedrus*, he demonstrated that he was well acquainted with the phenomenon, for he referred to several families who, according to him, practiced ecstatic speech, praying, and utterings while possessed. Continuing further, he pointed out that these practices even brought physical healing to those who engaged in them. Plato, together with most of his contemporaries, asserted that these occurrences were caused by divine inspiration. To support this view, he suggested (in *Timaeus*) that God takes possession of the mind while man sleeps or is possessed, and that during this state, God inspires him with utterances and/or visions which he can neither understand nor interpret.

Virgil, too, during the last century before Christ, described in *Aeneid* the activities of the Sybilline priestess on the Island of Delos. He attributed her ecstatic tongues to the result of her being unified with the god Apollo, a state that enveloped her while she meditated in a haunted cave amidst the eerie sounds of the wind playing strange music through the narrow crevices in the rocks.

In speaking of the Pythoness of Delphi, Chrysostom, a church father, wrote: "This same Pythoness then is said, being a female, to sit at times upon the tripod of

Appolo astride, and thus the evil spirit ascending from beneath and entering the lower part of her body, fills the woman with madness, and she with disheveled hair begins to play the bacchanal and to foam at the mouth, and thus being in a frenzy to utter the words of her madness."—Chrysostom, "Homilies on First Corinthians." (Italics supplied.)

Many of the mystery religions of the Graeco-Roman world undoubtedly included the same phenomenon. Among those most often listed are the Osiris cult originating in the land of the Pharaohs; the Mithra cult of the Persians, and the lesser known Eulusinian, Dionysian, and Orphic cults cradled in Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece. The basis for this opinion is that their entire system of belief and rituals centered around spirit possessions. Another indication comes from Lucian of Samosata (A.D. 120-198) who in *De Dea Syria* describes an example of glossolalia as exhibited by an itinerant believer of Juno, the Syrian goddess, stationed at Hierapolis in Syria.\* (Interestingly, the term *glossolalia*, so widely used today, comes from the Greek vernacular which was in existence long before the day of Pentecost.)

Moffatt's New Testament Commentary says of these manifestations: "Oracles of the great 'lord' at the Shrine of Delphi, as Heraclitus put it, were revelations of the

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\*Ira J. Martin III, "Glossolalie in the Apostolic Church," (Berea, Ky: Berea College Press, 1960, page 80); cited by Robert G. Gromacki, "The Modern Tongue Movement" (Philadelphia, Pa.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company), 1967, page 8.

god's will through ecstasy, not through sensible words. So were the Sybil's unintelligible cries. A priest or priestess, seized by sudden trances of the spirit, uttered mystic sayings, which were held to be all the more divine as they were least rational or articulate. [Italics supplied.] Philo in Alexandria had taken over the Greek notion, arguing that such ecstasy, when the mind or unconscious reason was superseded, was the highest reach of the human soul in its quest for God."—Commentary on 1 Cor. 14, p. 214.

It was into this suffocating world of heathen superstitions, pagan rituals—besides Jewish indifference—that Christ was born.

For a short while the world seemed to be on the road to spiritual restoration, but then it happened. The Jewish hierarchy decided on a series of countermoves. Aided by one of His own disciples and using the Roman power as executioners, they quickly moved in and bloodily erased their only Way to salvation, killing the King of the universe on the one world He loved most.

Confusion reigned, and His disciples spent anxious hours. Encouraged by His resurrection, they were greatly strengthened by Christ's promise to send them the Holy Spirit.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," He pledged. Acts 1:8.

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:18-20.

Not until a full fifty days after His death did the disciples begin to see the significance of His promise.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:1-4.

What happened here was the speaking of *real languages*—not unknown sounds. The Bible record is quite clear on this.

The term "tongues" (Greek *glōssais*) as used here, refers to both the physical organ used in the art of speaking as well as to the sound produced by that organ. Also, the word "other" (Greek *heterais*) signifies that the speech produced by the vocal organs of the apostles consisted of sounds different from those they normally produced. Verse 6 of the same chapter furthermore identifies these *heterais* sounds as *distinct languages*. The very wording, "*ēkouon heis hekastos tē idia dialektō lalountōn autōn* (they kept on hearing them speaking every one in his own language)," is evidence in itself.

This passage in Acts marks the earliest example of glossolalia as a Christian phenomenon, and the original Greek supplies the foundation for the viewpoint that these sounds were indeed real languages. What is more, the remainder of the chapter supports this:

"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" Acts 2:5-12.

This very question indicates that they had no conception of the basic philosophy of Christianity, of its power, or of the relationship of this unusual manifestation to the mission Christ had entrusted to His disciples.

Acts 2:5 brings their question into true perspective.

According to law, every devout male Jew living within a 20-mile radius of Jerusalem was bound to attend the three great yearly Jewish festivals; Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The word

Pentecost indicates that it fell on the fiftieth day after Passover. Since that holiday had already been celebrated in April of that year, Pentecost fell at the beginning of June, one of the nicest months in Palestine.

Whereas only the male Jews living within the required distance normally attended the Passover feast, Pentecost, on the other hand, attracted many more celebrants because of the better traveling conditions which prevailed at that time of year. There were undoubtedly thousands of Jews, together with those of Jewish ancestry who had been dispersed throughout the world, who returned to Jerusalem to attend the yearly thanksgiving feast, regarding it as a special highlight. Because of their sojourn in far distant countries, many spoke in languages not native to the Holy Land.

Filled with amazement, the foreign travelers now heard these strange Galileans address them in their own language, telling them of the miraculous power of Christ. Relatively unnoticed, unlearned, and born in a part of the world not necessarily known for its great philosophers, these day laborers and fishermen had suddenly turned into eloquent speakers, conversing with their listeners about the majesty of Christ, reasoning with heavenly wisdom and divinely inspired thoughts. It was indeed an international gathering that surrounded the exuberant apostles who, by now, were convinced of the awesome power of the Holy Spirit.

If this was not a miracle, nothing was, and the impression it etched on the minds of the crowd was ineradicable.

The second example of glossolalia in connection with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was equally as impressive, but on this occasion it was given to the Gentiles, not to the Jews. This signified for the first time that Christ's gospel was not reserved exclusively as a saving gesture to the Jewish race but was intended for the Gentiles as well.

It happened at the house of Cornelius in Caesarea to which Peter had traveled under divine mandate (See Acts 10:17-20).

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." Acts 10:44-46.

That these men also used actual languages and not a collection of unintelligible sounds is indicated by the words of Peter when he said that they heard them "magnify God."

Referring back to this same event, in Chapter 11:15 he relates: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." So this statement identifies their tongue experience with the original one at Pentecost.

The third time tongues are mentioned in the New Testament is in Acts 19:1-6, where Paul had an encounter at Ephesus with twelve disciples of John the Baptist.

"He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

This experience also is similar to Pentecost, as was the previous one. Taking into consideration the use of the word *glōssa* in this text, which is the very same word given to describe the other two accounts, we may conclude that this was also a manifestation of speaking in actual languages, not unknown sounds.

As far as these three examples of glossolalia are concerned, therefore, we are dealing with the supernaturally supplied, God-given ability to speak foreign languages. Because of His gift of glossolalia they were now able to preach the gospel to the known world, providing them with the ultimate means of communication. And the apostles and converts embraced it with enthusiasm.



# what really happened at Corinth?

If the passages in Acts were the only Bible references alluding to tongues, there would be little ground for controversy or for the glossolalists to speak in unknown sounds. In that case their practice, as generally manifested today, would be clearly out of harmony with the Biblical guidelines. But Paul's letter to the Corinthians contains passages that have given rise to serious misunderstandings.

What really happened at Corinth?

Let's quickly glance back at the first century and take a look at the background of the church that created the controversy.

An ancient trading city, Corinth was refounded by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony in 46 B.C. Situated between the Ionian and the Aegean Seas, on the isthmus connecting Greece with the Peloponnesus, and supported by its renowned ports of Lechaeum on the west and Cenchreæ on the east, it soon became a major crossroads of Mediterranean commerce. It is no wonder that the emperor selected it to be the Roman capital of

the province of Achaia, establishing it as the seat of the Roman proconsul.

As a colony of Rome, its citizens were also Roman, but other nations were equally well represented—witness the fact that foreign deities such as Isis and Serapis were highly revered, with temples nearly as impressive as those of the famed Apollo and Aphrodite. Devil worship and sexual licentiousness were so prevalent that Aphrodite's temple alone was staffed by more than 1,000 female slaves dedicated to satisfy the lusts of the goddess's earthly subjects.

Realizing all of this, Paul's efforts to evangelize Corinth could certainly not have been an easy task.

Upon his arrival in Corinth, Paul first lived with Aquila and Priscilla. Acts 18:2. From here he preached to both heathens and Jews. In answer to opposition initiated by two Macedonian visitors, Silas and Timotheus, Paul left and moved in with Justus, a Jewish man whose house was located next to the synagogue. Verses 4-7. His ensuing friendship with Crispus, chief ruler of the synagogue, resulted in his converting the ruler's entire household, in addition to many other Corinthians.

"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." Acts 18:9-11.

For eighteen difficult months Paul labored there;

then he left for Syria, leaving behind him the nucleus of a Christian church that was to continue his missionary work among the multitude of nationalities represented in the city.

While he was at Philippi, the first inklings of trouble among his newly created congregation reached him.

Chloe was the first one to break the distressing news to him. 1 Corinthians 1:11. Soon after, it was also reported to him by mail. 1 Corinthians 7:1. Then came the personal visits—with even more bad news. Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus undoubtedly felt that Paul had either not reacted in due haste or that the information supplied him had not been adequate. At any rate, they felt obligated to add their personal testimony to the already sordid reports. 1 Corinthians 16:17.

Listening to them, Paul became convinced that the church, formed during his second missionary journey and composed chiefly of former pagans, had fallen into a bad state of spiritual decomposition. The record of flagrant abuses of Christian living submitted to him were indeed horrifying—not just in number but more so in degree.

Paul must have been shocked when confronted with the reports.

There was, for example, gross division among the Christians; envying; strife (1 Corinthians 3:3); fornication; incest (1 Cor. 6:6); fraud (verse 8); association with drunkards, extortioners, and idolators (1 Cor. 5:11); heresies (1 Cor. 11:19); attending church in state of intoxication (verses 18-21); ignorance of natural and

spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1); denial of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12); and abuses of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:27-30).

Is it any wonder that Paul shuddered?

His beloved church had managed to blend almost fully once again with those Corinthian citizens who had made the city famous for its debauchery. To "Corinthianize" had become a byword in the ancient world. And now, instead of being a bright beacon in this idolatrous outpost of the Roman Empire, the Corinthian Christian church had practically rejoined them, mocking the power of Christianity.

While all of these violations are duly noted and rebuked in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul devotes what seems an almost excessive amount of attention to the improper handling of the gift of speaking in tongues. It must be stated, however, that nowhere in Corinthians does Paul speak out against the tongues or suggest that they (the Corinthians) were engaged in practicing a counterfeit manifestation. In fact, Paul wants all the believers in Corinth to speak in tongues (1 Cor. 14:5), saying expressly that he does not forbid speaking in tongues. Verse 39. He also thanked God, stating: "I speak with tongues more than ye all." Verse 18.

This combination of statements by Paul shows that he held the Corinthian tongues to be valid manifestations of godly glossolalia, not a counterfeit. Otherwise, would he, a man of God, have uttered the wish that all speak in tongues? Would he have counseled them not to

forbid speaking in tongues or admit that he speaks "with tongues more than ye all"?

It would have been most incongruous indeed!

Parts of chapters 12 and 13, and all of chapter 14 of his first letter to the Corinthians deal with tongues and the orderly use of this gift of the Spirit. Paul does not condemn the basic experience.

But a study of this New Testament phenomenon does not furnish us with indications that the gift of tongues had undergone a modification and had been changed with God's sanction from a manifestation of speaking real languages (as in Acts 2:1-4) to an unintelligible tongue by the time the Corinthians were using it. To the contrary, it is reasonable to assume that inasmuch as Corinth was a city with a cosmopolitan population, as it was the political and commercial hub of the province of Achaia, its citizenry was undoubtedly comprised of a great variety of nationalities, with a constant influx of commercial travelers. When Paul established the church at Corinth, it is quite possible that its members received the gift of tongues so that they would be able to reach out to these resident aliens and foreigners in their own language.

Paul admits as much.

"That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge," he points out in his letter; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: "so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 1:5-7.

After listing in the first eleven chapters of his letter

the problems that infiltrated the Corinthian church, Paul finally arrives at the problem area.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." 1 Cor. 12:1.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." Verse 4.

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues." Verses 8-10. (Italics supplied.)

It is apparent from the outset that Paul recognized that the Corinthians possessed unwholesome views concerning the gifts of the Spirit. He compares it to ignorance. The entire list of complaints he had received indicated that the church had reverted into heathenism, and the fact that Paul devotes three chapters to tongues proves that the use of this godly gift had especially fallen into disrepute. It would have been remarkable indeed if the church, having already reverted in part to paganism, and having ignored God's guidance in almost everything else, had in some way managed to preserve the gift of tongues unblemished. Most of these Christians had a heathen background, where speaking in tongues was held in high esteem and regarded as a token of favor from the gods.

Commenting on this, Edward Schweizer wrote:

"In Corinth a conception of the Spirit of God was predominant which mixed up Holy Spirit and enthusiasm. To the Corinthians, an utterance seemed to be more godly the more miraculous it appeared. Thus glossolalia was the highest degree of spiritual maturity, just because it showed itself depending on a mysterious power which would not be identified with any natural faculty of man."— "The Service of Worship," *Interpretation*, October, 1959, p. 403.

The ability to speak other languages had been bestowed by God as an express means to evangelize the world, and the emphasis Paul gives it shows that it had become a subject of controversy.

Setting himself squarely in the center of the conflict, he deflates the importance the Corinthians had placed on the gift. To them it had become the supreme proof of godliness, and because of its role in early Christianity, it attracted many converts. To believers in mystery religions, a new faith having a God who was really three gods in one, who gave His followers power to heal the sick, cast out demons, and speak in mysterious tongues, Paul's message must have seemed to be the ultimate. Many joined because of faith in Christ, but most assuredly others joined because of its supernatural appeal. It is presumably due to this that the gift of tongues had begun to occupy such a prominent position in the church—but now Paul moves in and gives it an entirely different place.

Twice in his admonishing letter to the Corinthians, Paul lists the various spiritual gifts, both times ending it

with tongues and interpretation, which was understandably a shock to the Corinthians.

In 1 Cor. 12:8-10, he mentions seven gifts, and then, almost as an afterthought, he adds the gifts of *tongues* and *interpretation*. That this was no mistake, but done intentionally, is obvious when comparing it to the second list in verses 28-30. Here he also lists seven gifts, and once again *tongues* and *interpretation* of tongues come last of all. In the lists of spiritual gifts given in Romans 13:3-8 and Ephesians 4:7-11, they are not mentioned at all. Therefore, it was not a manifestation revealing the doctrines and power of God as were the other gifts, but only a *communications medium* to help make clear that which the new converts were to know in *their own tongue*. The very nature of these two gifts is to communicate something—and by ranking the other gifts of the Spirit before those of *tongues* and *interpretation*, Paul practically says that the knowledge of and about God revealed through the first five gifts is to be relayed to others through the last two gifts; for without divine thoughts and ideas to communicate, the gifts of *tongues* and *interpretation* have no value.

It is worthy of note that in three of the four listings of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10; 28-30; Rom. 12:3-8; and Eph. 4:7-11), the gift of prophecy—that of “speaking for God,” is listed among the top two. The references to the gifts of the Spirit in Romans and Ephesians do not even mention *tongues* and *interpretation*.

When Paul therefore asked, “Are all apostles? are all

prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" (1 Cor. 12:29, 30), he clearly had a reason for this repetitious text.

In the final verse of the chapter he gives the answer. "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." 1 Cor. 12:31.

In Paul's opinion, the gifts so highly revered by the Corinthians, tongues and their interpretation, were not really so important. Plainly he advises them here to seek the gift with the greatest value for the church—that of prophecy, "speaking for God." Verse 5 of chapter 14 substantiates this: "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying."

Thus the Corinthians had indeed placed the wrong emphasis on tongues. Rather than seeking a gift that would edify the church, they sought for a manifestation that would edify themselves (1 Cor. 14:4), and in so doing they were destroying the church.

It became necessary for Paul to give some hard counsel, and he did not hesitate to do so. Realizing that their gift of tongues had become a communication medium without substance—for how would they be able to transmit the beauty of the gospel and the immense love of Christ if they themselves had lost the concept of its very meaning and were living in open violation of supreme love—he gave them a straightforward lecture.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal," he pointedly advised them in Chapter 13:1, and continued, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." 1 Cor. 13:4-7. "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." 1 Cor. 14:1.

Several Bible translators have throughout the years substituted the word "love" for "charity," but in either case, Paul is advising the Corinthians to reach out for those qualities that would make it impossible for them to tolerate the conditions they had brought into the church; the very ones which caused him to write the letter.

Contrary to the interpretation advanced by the charismatics, in chapter 13:1 Paul does not claim that he speaks with the tongues of men and angels. Dr. Gerhard F. Hasel of Andrews University suggests that, "Paul seems to say with hyperbole that if all linguistic possibilities including divine speech were at his disposal and he lacked love, it would mean nothing. 1 Cor. 13:1 does not provide the key to Paul's idea of 'speaking in tongues.' "

The Living Bible paraphrases 1 Cor. 13:1 as follows: "If I had the gift of being able to speak in other

languages without learning them, and could speak in every language there is in all of heaven and earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making noise."

At this point it would be well for us to recognize the subtle changes the translators have brought about in the Bible. Throughout Paul's discussion of the manifestation of tongues in Chapters 12, 13 and 14, he has used the word "tongue" or "tongues" twenty-three times. But even though in 1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 14, 19, and 27 the adjective "unknown" precedes the "tongue" or "tongues," *nowhere can this be found in the original text!* The translators who prepared the King James Version merely added it to the texts with the hope that it would help clarify the meaning. This is signified in some editions by printing it in italics.

It appears that they have accomplished just the opposite!

Chapter 14 provides most of the statements used by glossolalists in their attempts to form a sound basis for their position, beginning with the first verse and continuing almost uninterruptedly through to verse 40. (Words supplied by the King James translators are shown within brackets here and in the following pages.)

"For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth [him], howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye

all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying." 1 Cor. 14:2-5.

Considering the many languages spoken in Corinth because of its cosmopolitan nature, certain members of the congregation undoubtedly were able to converse fluently in more than one "tongue" due to their association with the foreigners. Also, there must have been many who had received the "gift of tongues" supernaturally.

"Do you speak a language?" is a question often asked Americans of foreign extraction, not with the intent of inquiring into their ability to speak *English*, but rather to inquire if they can speak a *foreign language* or a *foreign tongue*. When someone queries, "How many languages do you speak?" they most certainly do not want to know whether the subject speaks English; that's pretty obvious. They want to know how many other languages, and this is precisely the issue in Corinthians.

When Paul states, "He that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God," he is simply saying that if you speak with a tongue or an intelligent foreign *language* in church (that he is speaking of activities within the church is indicated in the remainder of the chapter), you really only speak to God, for no one else understands it. In other words, he is saying, "in the spirit he speaketh mysteries."

Prophesy! Speak for God! Paul exclaims. At least that edifies the church. The speaker in tongues, on the other

hand, only edifies himself, that is, makes himself look important since he himself is his only listener.

Somewhat attempting to soften his approach, but not without failing to reemphasize his position, Paul counsels, I wish you would all speak in languages, but I'd prefer that you'd prophesy, for that is far superior to speaking in languages unless you have it interpreted so that it may benefit the church. See 1 Cor. 14:2-5. Clearly Paul does not forbid foreigners to use their languages in the church; but he strongly desires their comments to be translated for the good of the church. Here Paul is specifically speaking to people who were employing the gift of glossolalia incorrectly within the church instead of using it to evangelize Corinth, or to those who were using a learned language within the church to make it appear that they too had received a gift from the Spirit, or lastly to those who used their native (foreign) tongue in worship services. Inasmuch as they had a common language, there was no apparent need for "tongues" within the church—hence Paul's admonition.

In verse 6 Paul goes a step further: "Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?"

Simple but straightforward counsel! Paul undoubtedly used many diverse languages on his missionary journeys. But how would it benefit the church if he should come to them speaking in tongues they were

unable to understand? And then Paul makes a comparison intended to erase all possible misconceptions.

"And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air." Verses 7-9.

His reference to trumpet sounds during battle is especially meaningful, as even in recent times military commands to retreat or attack were given via the trumpet or bugle. Only when these sounds were distinct and clear could their true meaning be understood by the armies. Confusing sounds would meet with disastrous results. Once again Paul cautions against the use of sounds other than those normally used. "For ye shall speak into the air."

Having pointed to the trumpet sound as an example to some—ex-warriors perhaps who had been converted to Christianity and who now were practicing tongues within the congregation—Paul continues by relating another example.

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." Verses 10, 11.

Many Bible translations—RSV, NASB, TEV, Phillips,

Weymouth, Goodspeed, Moffatt—have translated the original word used for “voices” to “languages,” a meaning generally endorsed by New Testament scholars. Consequently, what Paul is referring to is that there are many languages in the world, but without knowing what the speaker is saying, both speaker and hearer will be as strangers to one another. By saying this he attempts to point out once more the absurdity of their actions, but this time he directed his counsel to those in the church who had the ability to speak either supernaturally supplied or intellectually learned languages. He continues, wherefore let him that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an [unknown] tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” Verses 13-15.

Different meanings may be attached to verse 13. Possibly he means that someone who speaks in a language should pray that someone else in the congregation would receive the ability to interpret for him, or it could mean that he should pray that someone else might receive the power to *explain* what he had just been saying. Verse 14 points to the first conclusion, for Paul compares it to a prayer uttered in a *language* and continues to state that in such case the spirit prays, but the action of the mind produces no results, no fruits, and is thus “unfruitful.”

In corporate worship, public prayer is offered to God

as an expression of the love and devotion of the entire congregation. If spoken, however, in a "foreign" language, its function as part of the corporate worship ceases. Then in verse 15, Paul ties both the "spirit" and the "understanding" together. Dr. Walter Specht, a New Testament theologian at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan offers this comment: "He who preaches the sermon in a worship service is speaking for God to the people. He who offers the prayer is speaking for the people to God. It requires an intelligent exercise of the mind as well as the spirit to meet this sacred responsibility."

Both spirit and understanding are a necessity for an intelligent communication in praying and in singing. Paul adds that if one prays with the spirit alone while in the company of the "unlearned" it won't give them a reason to say Amen, because they will not be able to understand the meaning of the sound they heard. Public response to a prayer has always been important. The word "Amen," Hebrew for "so be it," is a standard ending to a Christian prayer, and when members of a congregation join in a corporate prayer and make it their own, they signify this by repeating this word. Yet how could this be done if the language used in the prayer was unintelligible?

Says Paul, speaking of this type of prayer, "For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified." Verse 17.

Glossolalists invariably quote verse 18 of Chapter 14 to prove that Paul himself spoke in unknown tongues: "I

thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all." But Paul adds in the following verse: "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that [by my voice] I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an [unknown] tongue." Verse 19.

Paul was a world traveler. Especially endowed with the Holy Spirit, leader of a God-directed missionary movement, he journeyed from country to country, conversing with other nationalities in their native tongues. Would God limit Paul's gift of tongues to only one *foreign language*? Knowing Christ's desire to spread the gospel to all the world, no doubt Paul really meant that he had the ability to speak with more languages than all the others. His God entrusted him with a commission unequaled in scope and importance, and He would definitely not confine this great task to only one foreign-language area. To say that verse 18 means that Paul spoke in many different kinds of untranslatable sounds—is this not to depart from the sense of the verses that precede it?

Furthermore, in verse 19 Paul explains that (even though he speaks many languages) he would rather speak five words with understanding than ten thousand in a language. Following this, in verse 22, he makes a clear distinction between the roles tongues and prophecy are to play in the church.

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying [serveth] not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." Don't demonstrate your language ability

to fellow believers, he counsels here, but reserve them for the unbelievers to show them that God has given you a special blessing which enables you to preach to them in their own language. Don't bring your tongues into the church, but prophesy instead, for that is given for the benefit of the believers!

He thus continued, discussing a point which no doubt had been in the center of the controversy: "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" Verse 23.

"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." Verse 26.

Imagine the chaos that must have prevailed within the Corinthian church. One group speaking foreign languages, other members vying for attention to propagate a new doctrine, others claiming to have a revelation or to interpret tongues while perhaps a few true Christians prayed in quiet meditation. It is no wonder that Paul questioned, "Will they not say that ye are mad?" A spiritual chaos such as this can never be edifying, and his admonishment, "let all things be done unto edifying" was more than necessary! The situation confronting Paul unquestionably turned unbelievers away from the church, and this he wanted to avoid at all cost.

Deeply troubled, Paul established guidelines under which the Corinthian church would be allowed to

practice their spiritual gifts. Normally this counsel would not be needed, as mature Christians would not consciously misuse a gift of God. The Corinthians' immaturity in spiritual matters, however, necessitated some strict rules, and these Paul proceeded to provide.

"If any man speak in an [unknown] tongue, [let it be] by two, or at the most [by] three, and [that] by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If [anything] be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." Verses 27-31.

Paul does not forbid speaking in tongues, nor does he prohibit prophesying. He does insist, however, that if there are those who speak in a language, then let them do it one at a time and *only then* if an interpreter is present. If this is not the case, then let them speak only to God, that is, without involving the congregation. He laid down basically the same rules for the prophets. Prophesying was to be done one by one to teach and to comfort. This sounds reasonable, doesn't it? Speak in tongues one by one *only* if there is someone who can translate; prophesy one by one and let the others judge, using it to teach and comfort the church. Nowhere does Paul advocate that tongues are to be spoken within the church nor that prophesying was to be proclaimed outside of the church, neither does he give any indica-

tion that the tongues he was describing had undergone a change in linguistic structure since Pentecost.

In his entire letter, Paul spoke as the voice of God to an erring church. To those who still questioned his authority he warned: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order." Verses 37-40.

And with those final two adverbial qualifications Paul gave his closing exhortation to the members whose indecent behavior had brought discredit upon the church and whose disorderly conduct had greatly impeded its growth.

During the centuries following the death of Christ, the Pentecostal experience of the apostles as recorded in the book of Acts became less and less needful. In the beginning the apostles needed the gift of tongues to reach people of other languages. Next, their converts continued to carry the gospel to far-distant lands. In later years whole countries learned of the revolutionary message of love, either by missionaries or by believers who relayed the story of Christ to their home countries. As a result, the need for glossolalia greatly diminished, for the language barrier was slowly coming down. An obstacle to the spreading of the gospel had been surmounted. The gift of tongues had been given to humanity to do a specific job, and this was accom-

plished. Now it was up to mankind to act and to improvise.

In the earlier writings of the church fathers, tongues-speaking is mentioned. Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202), a scholar of stature, studied under Polycarp of Smyrna, who is reported to have been a personal protégé of the apostle John. Irenaeus, in "Against Heresies" (chapter VI, sec. 1), wrote this commentary on 1 Corinthians 2:6: "Terming those persons 'perfect' who have received the Spirit of God, and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as he used Himself also to speak. In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God."<sup>1</sup>

The Christian apologist, Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165) supports this in *Dialogue With Trypho*, chapter LXXXVIII, where he states: "Now it is possible to see amongst us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God."<sup>2</sup>

Even Tertullian (A.D. 160-220), in his "Against Marcion," Book V, chapter VIII, writes concerning his acquaintanceship with the gift. In his argument with Marcion, he penned the following statement: "Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his god, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have both predicted things to come, and have made manifest the secrets of the heart; let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer—only let it be

by the Spirit, in an ecstasy that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him. . . . Now all these signs (of spiritual gifts) are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty, and they agree, too, with the rules, and the dispensations, and the instructions of the Creator; therefore without doubt the Christ, and the Spirit, and the apostle, belong severally to my God.”<sup>3</sup>

There was every reason in heaven—and on earth—to keep glossolalia active so long as the gospel had not reached the strategic locations of the known world. Once this was accomplished and considerable inroads had been made, the gift of tongues quickly diminished.

Not until the third century after Christ did scholars and historians begin to question the whereabouts of the preaching tongues.

Discussing the spiritual gifts as found in 1 Corinthians, John Chrysostom (A.D. 345-407) begins his “Homily XXIX” (on 1 Corinthians 12:1, 2) thus: “This whole place is very obscure [referring to 1 Cor. 12:1, 2], but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place.”<sup>4</sup>

Was this perhaps the crucial point where glossolalia had done its work and was no longer given? There is no reason to doubt the validity of Chrysostom’s statement, especially since Augustine (A.D. 354-430) reaches practically the same conclusion. In his “Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of St. John,” Homily VI, section 10, he writes: “In the earliest time, ‘the Holy Ghost fell upon

them that believed: and they spake with tongues,' which they had not learned, 'as the Spirit gave them utterance.' These were signs adapted to the times. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to shew that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away."<sup>5</sup>

Some theologians have tried to build a case for a continuation of the supernatural languages on the basis of an isolated questionable example (Montanus), but after having been manifested in strength in the apostolic age and possibly up into the third century, it faded from the scene, and no historian since that time has ever uncovered concrete evidence to the contrary. If it had remained within the church, the writings of other church fathers of those early centuries surely would have referred to this "gift of the spirit" in glowing terms, as it was a major manifestation of God-power. The gift was so controversial and so clearly supernatural from its inception that a continuation of it could hardly have gone unnoticed.

True glossolalia disappeared because of its decreasing need—but what about the other "gift of tongues," the gibberish, the senseless syllables that resembled the devil worship of the pagans?

Occult practitioners maintain that it has never disappeared, but has remained active within the caves of the witches, the magicians' caves, and the seance rooms of the mediums. Theirs is a satanic counterfeit, for God would never manifest Himself in *this* manner within

their circles. Even then their gift lay semidormant until a full thousand years after Christ, when a woman, Hildegard, Prophet of the Rhine, (A.D. 1098-1179) forced it back into the limelight.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, in describing her “*Lingua Ignota*,” a manuscript relaying her experiences, states:

“The manuscript in eleven folios, which gives a list of nine hundred words of an unknown language, mostly nouns and only a few adjectives, a Latin, and in a few cases a German, explanation, together with an unknown alphabet of twenty-three letters, printed in Pitra.”<sup>6</sup> If this was a continuation of the Pentecostal experience, then a drastic transformation must have taken place over the centuries of silence, for her sounds were strange and weird, without any comparison to either a known language or a language structure. It has received careful scrutiny from various linguists, but no one has been able to make it “fit.” In fact, no one has been able to make it match certain norms to which all languages—if they are to be mediums of communication—must conform.

Much of modern glossolalia had its beginnings in the post-Reformation era. Martin Luther did not practice the gift personally in any form, but the many cults and sects which spawned from his reformatory movement soon felt the need for “exclusive” experiences and unique methods which would guarantee them their continuing contact with God on a highly personal level. The uncertainty which prevailed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was undoubtedly a major reason for this search for exclusivity and spiritual superiority.

Together with the more formal doctrines, speaking in strange, untranslatable tongues crept in and became an accepted rite in many worship services of the new sects. Again, the start was rather slow, but once the strange utterances had been judged to be of divine origin, they occurred in the weirdest places.

William Howitt in *History of the Supernatural* wrote of a happening in Amsterdam in 1566, as follows: "They climbed up the walls and over roofs like cats, made the most horrible grimaces, and spoke in foreign languages. . . . Sometimes they became cataleptic, were stiff as trunks of trees and might be carried about in the same manner." A scant 150 years later, the practice presented itself again, this time combined with prophesying. G. B. Cutten mentions this incident in his *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*. Citing an unusual phenomenon that had suddenly affected the mental ability of a large group of children belonging to the French Huguenots, he writes: "They would first swoon and become insensible to all sense impressions. Then, although they did not know French, children of three years of age and older would preach sermons three-quarters of an hour long, in correct French. . . . They could not be stopped when once started, and they continued in this abnormal state until they finished." Page 56.

Researcher Kelsey adds to this: "The first occurrence of (their) tongues grew out of the prophetic utterance of a ten-year-old, Isabeau Vincent, who had fled from the mistreatment of her father and had seen the king's soldiers bayonet women and children worshiping to-

gether in their own church. In an ecstatic experience, she called for repentance."—Morton T. Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1964), pages 52, 53.

The Jansenists, named after their founder Cornelius Jansen, were a seventeenth century Catholic Reform movement known also for their ecstatic behavior. They also exhibited ecstatic glossolalia, usually while meditating at the tomb of the Archdeacon of Paris, a staunch defender of Jansenism. Convulsive movements, speaking in tongues, and other physical signs which resulted from their meditative actions convinced them that the Spirit of God was with them. Significant is that they believed—as do modern glossolalists—that an outside power controlled their speech organs and compelled them to utter words and convulsive signs over which they had no control.

The case of "Mother" Ann Lee (1736-1784), founder of the Shakers, focused the attention of the religious world of the eighteenth century on a renewed emphasis of the tongues. Even prior to her coming to the United States, Mother Lee had already experienced her share of trouble in England because of her high-spirited, erratic behavior. Accused of blasphemy, she was summoned to explain her actions before a group of clergymen-linguists of the Church of England. While appearing before them, she received her "gift" of the spirit and proceeded to speak to the assembled clergymen in no less than 72 different languages. At least, that is what they claimed. A number of them went even further to state that she

spoke many of these languages fluently. The big question here, of course, is Where did the Church of England manage to find four ministers expertly qualified to judge the grammatical accuracy of 72 distinct languages? George W. Dollar, in referring to the Shakers' other expressions of spiritual ecstasy, writes, "The gift of tongues was also accompanied by times of unspeakable joy and dancing during which many of the hymns of the movement were composed, although made up of unintelligible and unheard-of words."—"Church History of the Tongues Movement," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October-December, 1963, p. 320.

Begging for attention are two other examples of untranslatable utterings—those of the Irvingites and the Mormons. The former, operating in Britain as followers of the Scotch Presbyterian Edward Irving, evidenced a strong apocalyptic interest and became convinced that before the soon second coming of Christ the gift of tongues would return to His church. Strange sounds began to emanate from the mouths of the worshipers. Interpretations and evaluations that followed classified it as both languages and gibberish. In the opinion of R. A. Knox, its linguistic value was indeed questionable. He writes in *Enthusiam* (London: 1950), page 553, that "specimens of Irvingite glossolaly which have been preserved to us are beyond the reach of any lexicon. Such utterances of 'Hippo gerosto niparos boorastin farini O fastor sungor boorinos epoongos menati' . . . hardly bear out the claim that 'the languages are distinct, well-inflected, well-compacted languages.' The philology

of another world does not abide our question, but if we are to judge these results by merely human standards, we must admit that a child prattles no less convincingly."

As for the Mormons, founded by Joseph Smith (1805-1844), the principle of speaking in tongues was first introduced by him into his church in 1833 and reaffirmed in a declaration of Mormon doctrines eleven years later. It must be said, however, that the early Mormons never claimed that what was spoken was indeed a language. They did declare though that God would shape the various sounds into a language and make it meaningful.

Referring to one of those meetings, it has been reported that "it would be advertised that at a certain meeting someone would speak with tongues. When the meeting was well under way, Father Smith would call upon some illiterate brother to rise and speak in tongues in the name of Jesus Christ.

"The order was given, 'Arise upon your feet, speak or make some sound, continue to make sounds of some kind and the Lord will make a tongue or language of it.'—C. B. Cutten, *Speaking in Tongues*, page 68.

The truth is that glossolalia did not start with Pentecost—nor did it end there! The true gift of languages apparently disappeared when God failed to see a further necessity for its use, but the pre-Christian Satanic tongues persisted. History speaks eloquently and plainly when it comes to supplying examples of pagan glossolalia in pre-Christian times. The introduction of a true gift of languages in Acts only furnished the

counterfeit with a new impetus. This now made it possible for its practitioners to confuse the issue by comparing their gift to the God-given ability, thus shedding wherever possible its heathen heritage and enshrouding its post-Christian continuation of the phenomenon with a cloak of Christian respectability.

#### References

1. "The Ante-Nicene Fathers," Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), Vol. 1, p. 531.
2. "Ibid.," p. 243.
3. "Ibid.," Vol. 3, pp. 446, 447.
4. "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers," Philip Schaff, ed. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1898), Vol. 12, p. 168.
5. "Ibid.," Vol. 7, pp. 497, 498.
6. "The Catholic Encyclopedia," 1910 ed., article "Hildegard," Vol. 7, p. 352.